

PRESS RELEASE

Issued by the Montana Arts Council
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Buck, Butterfield and Roberti tapped for 2010 Governor's Arts Awards

Governor Brian Schweitzer announced Bozeman residents John Buck, Deborah Butterfield and Kelly Roberti as three of six distinguished Montanans to receive the 2010 Governor's Arts Award.

In addition to Buck, Butterfield and Roberti, the other honorees are: Amy Ragsdale and Pat Williams from Missoula; and Donna Forbes from Billings.

Of the honorees, Governor Brian Schweitzer says "These six Montanans have dedicated their lives to bringing the very best the arts has to offer to all the people in our state. They provide us with a legacy of talent that continues to enrich our lives and our communities."

The honorees will be recognized at a ceremony in the state capitol's Old Supreme Court Chambers Friday, January 22, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. The ceremony, and the reception that follows in the Rotunda, are held for the recipients, their family and friends along with state legislators.

The Montana Arts Council and the Montana Ambassadors have joined forces again to produce the upcoming awards activities. The 2010 honorees will be recognized both in Helena in January and with "hometown celebrations" in their respective communities during the months of March through May.

DOWNLOAD JPEG PHOTO IMAGES AND PROFILES OF ALL THE HONOREES AT

http://www.art.mt.gov/about/about_govawards.asp

PROFILES OF BOZEMAN HONOREES

by Kristi Niemeyer for the Montana Arts Council

John Buck and Deborah Butterfield

John Buck and Deborah Butterfield are each world-renowned artists who, as a couple, have generously shared their home, time and talents with countless Montana artists and art students.

According to Josh DeWeese, ceramics professor at Montana State University and former director of the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, the couple share a "unique and authentic vision, and are leading voices in the field of contemporary art."

Buck is both a sculptor and a printmaker who works with carved wood, assemblage and bronze sculptures, as well as creating large, multicolored woodblock prints.

Since beginning his collaboration with master printmaker Bud Shark in 1983, Buck has explored the expressive possibilities of woodblock in more than 40 different prints. Using a pen, a nail or his fingernail, the artist incises the wood planks that form the base and background of his prints with images and symbols drawn from the daily news, his own sculpture and from nature. He embeds that base with a large, carved image, often of a figure, although he has also depicted a jar full of fireflies, an eagle, or a subtly colored moth.

As a skilled wood carver and fabricator, Buck has also created a unique language of three-dimensional symbols to comment on the world and our position in it.

“John Buck’s fertile imagination, deft and constantly refining craftsmanship, extraordinary work ethic, and ambitious vision have produced a stunning legacy of works,” writes artist Gordon McConnell, a former curator and assistant director at the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings. Buck’s prints and sculptures are in major public collections from New York to San Francisco, and his lengthy list of awards includes a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship and a National Artists Award.

Butterfield – known for her sculptures of horses – employs scraps of metal, wood and other found objects, often cast in bronze.

An avid horsewoman and accomplished dressage rider, she has an extensive boarding and riding facility near Bozeman devoted to equestrian pursuits. Her intimate understanding of these majestic animals seems to infuse her sculptures, which vary in scale from quarter life-size to larger-than-life.

Her partnership with a bronze foundry in Walla Walla, WA, has enabled her to fasten found objects, including logs, branches, sticks, planks and boards, onto an armature, which is recreated at the foundry. The stunning results of the elaborate casting and patina process translate Butterfield’s passionate, intuitive understanding of the horse into permanent, durable sculptures.

Her works are owned by many of the nation’s preeminent museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art and the Denver Art Museum.

In addition to receiving honorary doctorates from both Montana State University in Bozeman and Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Butterfield has received two fellowships from the NEA, as well as a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and the American Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award.

“Debbie and John are outstanding artists in any geography you could consider – international, national, regional, and certainly in the state of Montana,” writes Liz Gans, former director of the Holter Museum of Art in Helena. The museum highlighted Butterfield’s sculptures when it reopened in 2002 after a major renovation. “Her powerful horses in the High Gallery made the perfect statement for the new Holter: bold, appealing, reflecting Montana’s heritage while capturing the spirit of our own time.”

In addition to teaching at Montana State University (Buck from 1976-1990 and Butterfield from 1979-1987), the couple has supported art museums and institutions around the state, and welcomed inquisitive art students to their studios for a visit. They also funded an art program for the small Cottonwood elementary school, which their children attended, providing art instruction that wouldn’t have existed otherwise.

“Perhaps one of the most important roles they have played is that of mentor and example to the state’s artists through their ability to create very successful careers in New York and other urban centers while living in Montana,” writes Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson, president of the Oregon College of Art and Craft and former director of Paris Gibson Square Museum in Great Falls and Beall Park Art Center in Bozeman.

In addition to serving as role models, they’ve also hosted world-renowned artists, gallery owners and collectors at their home in Bozeman and introduced their guests to artists from around the state. “This has helped connect Montana’s artists to the larger art world, enabling some of the state’s most outstanding artists to expand their markets and reputations, both regionally and nationally,” says Laing-Malcolmson.

The couple has also hosted several unique art events, including a major one-week symposium in 1991 of artists from Montana’s sister state of Kumamoto, Japan; and special exhibits and celebrations of the work and legacies of the late Robert and Gennie DeWeese (also Governor’s Arts Award recipients).

“No other Montana-based artists since C.M. Russell have been embraced by such a wide public in and beyond Montana than Debbie and John, and none have done more to refresh and reinforce through their art the idea of this state,” says Robyn Peterson, executive director of the Yellowstone Art Museum.

“They have embraced this place with the fierce affection that characterizes those who actively choose to make someplace home,” she adds. “Both have created vital and sophisticated work that has entered and influenced the mainstream of contemporary American art to a degree that simply cannot be claimed by any other Montana-based artists.”

Kelly Roberti

The *L.A. Reader* describes Bozeman jazz musician Kelly Roberti as an “earthy and meticulous bassist ... an heir apparent to the late Charles Mingus.”

High praise for an artist whose roots dive deeply in Montana soil. Roberti was raised in Bozeman by a family of music teachers and performers, and steeped in all musical genres as a child.

He played his first gig at age 11 and has gone on to tour with legends in the jazz, rock and world music, including Arnett Cobb, Eddie Harris, Peter Gabriel, Freddie Hubbard and Tommy Flanagan. Along the way, he’s performed at nearly every major venue, both clubs and festivals, on five continents.

During the late 80s, Roberti organized tours throughout the U.S., and also hired well-known recording artists to tour with his NRE trio, comprised of Roberti on bass, Bob Nell on piano and Brad Edwards on drums. He has recorded over 50 albums with some of the greatest jazz musicians in the world and currently tours with David Murray, the renowned jazz saxophonist and bass clarinetist.

Murray, who first discovered Roberti in the 1980s, recalls, “Touring the U.S. at the time was something that traveling salesmen did in more frequency than jazz artists. Kelly ... creatively put many legendary musicians to work in front of real jazz audiences in Montana and spanning the country. This is unheard of today and, truthfully, it was then.”

Pianist and MSU music professor Eric Funk describes Roberti as “an adventurous musician. As a composer and performer, he is extremely forward-looking and unique.”

The musician “stands among his colleagues as a seasoned, authentic jazz artist who has occupied the world’s stages with the legends,” Funk adds. “He is a true treasure to Montana.”

As a teacher and performer, Roberti is credited with inspiring generations of Montana musicians. “He teaches and mentors young musicians and is compelled to wield honesty into the mix of their musical training,” says Funk.

He’s also brought master musicians to the state, including Murray, Don Pullen and Emily Remler, and paired them with locals, both in workshops and performances.

“The essence of this American music is passed on through the unique mentoring of player to player in live performance,” writes jazz artist M.J. Williams. “Kelly made this possible for many Montana players through his persistent networking and his belief that great music can happen here too.”

He’s also helped introduce Montanans to jazz, beginning in 1982 when he helped found the Bozeman Blues and Jazz Society. He continued producing jazz performances over the next two decades, organizing more than 100 memorable performances by some of the greatest figures in jazz, including Nat Adderley, Eddie Harris, Tommy Flanagan, Ray Brown, Woody Shaw, Arnett Cobb and David “Fathead” Newman.

“Kelly was able to introduce to Montana the sounds of these great artists – sadly now mostly passed on – and in the process make himself known as an outstanding bassist and composer,” says one of the society’s co-founders, Ray Pratt, professor emeritus of political science at Montana State University.

“I can think of no single person I have known who knows more about jazz ...,” Pratt adds. “He has lived the music and lived and performed it with some of its greatest practitioners.”

“Jazz with Kelly Roberti,” a summer series launched at the Bozeman Public Library in 2008, has helped infect a younger generation with a passion for jazz, and reintroduce the genre to others.

The free series started as five programs aimed at highlighting the influence of jazz in Bozeman and showcasing local musicians. It evolved into “a must-see, nine-part series replete with many incredibly talented musicians donating their time, educational interviews conducted by Kelly himself, real-life musician stories from the road, riveting jam sessions, and soulful music all made available to the young and old of our community,” says Paula Beswick, the library’s foundation director.

She lauds Roberti for “his dedication, skill, and ability to bring the community together under the umbrella of music.”

“True music is an indefinable communication. It is physics, philosophy, history, mathematics and, to me, a big dose of romance,” says Roberti. “I want to give to it what I have been given. I want to contribute to the tradition, the true human condition and to the next generation.”

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